**Worksheet**

**The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas**by John Boyne

**THE STORY**

The Boy in the Striped Pajamas **is a fictional tale of the unlikeliest of friends: the son of a Nazi commandant and a Jewish concentration camp inmate. Written by John Boyne and published in 2006 by David Fickling Books, the story was made into a major motion picture in 2008.**

**The novel, set in Nazi Germany, begins when nine-year-old Bruno and his family must move from their lovely home in Berlin to a new house in an unfamiliar place called "Out With." Tempted to explore his new environment, Bruno is told that there are certain places that are "Out Of Bounds At All Times And No Exceptions." Unable to fight his adventuresome spirit, however, Bruno ventures forth into the unknown one afternoon.**

**Bruno comes upon a fence that he follows until he sees a young boy sitting on the other side of the fence. The shoeless boy is wearing striped pajamas and a cloth cap. Bruno also notices that the boy is wearing an armband with a star on it. Bruno makes fast friends with the boy, Shmuel, and they quickly discover that they share the same birthday. The boys discuss their families and where they are from. At the end of their first meeting, Bruno asks Shmuel why there are so many people on his side of the fence and what they are doing there. A few days later, Bruno's father has dinner guests; the man's name is "the Fury" and his date is called Eva. Bruno instantly dislikes the couple. Bruno's sister Gretel, whom he refers to as "the Hopeless Case," is smitten by the man and tries hard to impress him and his lady friend. Bruno, however, is disgusted by his sister's behavior and her budding romance with a young soldier.**

**Much like Bruno hears "**[Auschwitz](http://www.enotes.com/genocide-encyclopedia/auschwitz)**" as "Out With," he also incorrectly hears "**[the Führer](http://www.enotes.com/world-war-ii-biographies/hitler-adolf)**" as "the Fury." Boyner masterfully tells the story from Bruno's perspective; it is clear that the innocence of Bruno's childhood remains intact despite the fact that he is living on the periphery of a death camp and has met Adolf Hitler.**

**Bruno continues to explore the woods near his house and often finds himself at the fence spending time with Shmuel. Bruno brings him food, and the friends lament the fact that they cannot explore together or play a game of football. Shmuel confides in Bruno that he is unable to find his father and he is worried. Bruno vows to help Shmuel look for his father; to that end, Shmuel promises to get Bruno some pajamas so that he will blend in on his side of the fence.**

**One fateful day, Bruno sheds his clothes, dons the pajamas, and sneaks onto Shmuel's side of the fence. As the boys search for Shmuel's father, the soldiers herd the prisoners, Bruno among them, into the gas chambers where they meet their untimely death hand in hand.**

The Boy in the Striped Pajamas **explores the beauty of a child's innocence in a time of war, the common desire we all have for friendship, and the fences—both literal and figurative—that we must all navigate and choose whether or not to break down.**

**THE CHARACTERS**

The characters from the novel and film The Boy in the Striped Pajamas are:   
  
***Bruno –***

Being the protagonist, Bruno is a naïve 8-9 year-old German boy whose father is the commandant of "Out-With" (Auschwitz) Born on April 15, 1934, he wants to become an explorer when an adult. Bruno is very adventurous, often gets into mischief, and hates being called "Little Man" by Lieutenant Kotler. His three-best-friends-for-life are Daniel, Martin, and Karl. Until, at the end of the novel, he forgets his friends names and tells Shmuel that he is his best friend for life.   
  
  
***Shmuel***  
Shmuel is a Polish Jew who is Bruno's exact age. He has a brother named Josef, his father is a watchmaker, and his mother is a teacher. Shmuel is very quiet, and wants to work in a zoo. (in the novel he says he likes animals)   
  
  
***Gretel***  
Gretel, known as "The Hopeless Case" to her younger brother Bruno, is a 12 year-old who loves dolls. Her best friends are Hilda, Isobel and Louise. Gretel is a show-off who thinks she knows everything, and is flirty towards Lieutenant Kotler. She also is a member of the Hitler Youth.   
  
  
***Lieutenant Kurt Kotler***

Despite his father not being a Nazi, Kotler is a harsh Nazi lieutenant who constantly flirts with the commandant's daughter, Gretel. He is very rude and brutal. Later, he is sent to the front lines for not reporting his father to officials.   
  
  
***Ralf (Father)***   
***Elsa (Mother)***   
Ralf is the commandant of the camp. Although a loving father, he is quite a harsh commandant. He is the father of Bruno and Gretel. Elsa is a very good mother, and does not agree with Nazism, although she never speaks out.   
  
  
***Pavel -***   
Pavel is a Polish-Jewish doctor-turned-waiter. He's kind hearted and helps bandage Bruno's knee.

***Maria -***   
Maria is the family's maid. She's very quiet, and she used to admire the commandant until he took the promotion to Auschwitz.

**YOUR TASK:**

***Questions:***

**Think about the characters:**

1. What adjectives would you use to describe Bruno?  Do you like him?  Would you want to be his friend?  Are there times when he disappoints you?  Did he ever impress you?
2. Do you think Bruno changes during the book?
3. How does Bruno’s limited understanding of the circumstances surrounding him change the way you understand them?
4. Were you surprised by what you learned about Pavel’s past in chapter seven?  How does that make you see the circumstances differently?
5. Compare and contrast Bruno’s father and Pavel.  Do they have similarities?  What are their differences?  Does Pavel ever act like a father?  Does Bruno’s father ever not act like one?
6. What do Bruno and Shmuel have in common?  What are their differences?

**Think about the story:**

1. In Chapter 10, Bruno meets Shmuel.  If you were Bruno would you have talked to him?  Why or why not?
2. Explain the relationship between Gretel and Bruno.  In chapter 14, would you have trusted Gretel enough to tell her about Shmuel?  What might have happened if Bruno had told her?
3. In Chapter 15, Bruno denies that Shmuel is his friend.  Why do you think he did this?  Would you have done something different?  Shmuel forgives Bruno.  Would you have forgiven him?  Why or why not?
4. Bravery is one of the themes of the novel.  Bruno thinks soldiers and explorers are brave.  Bruno says he feels like a coward when he denies Shmuel is his friend.  What do you think bravery is?  What characters show bravery in the novel?  Which characters aren’t brave?
5. Why do you think of the end of the book?  Did it surprise you?  What did you expect to happen?
6. In the end, the author says, “Of course, this all happened a long time ago and nothing like that could ever happen again.  Not in this day and age.”  Do you think that’s true?  Why or why not?  Why do you think the author ended the book this way?